



FC ST HELENS COMMUNITY CIC:

S T R A T E G I C P L A N

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Prepared by
GRANT LANE



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for FC St Helens Community CIC, setting out its vision and objectives for the next five years. As a vibrant and inclusive community-focused football club, we aim to foster participation at all levels, promote mental and physical well-being, and empower individuals through sport and development programmes. The plan outlines a multifaceted approach to growth, focusing on expanding inclusivity, enhancing player pathways, improving infrastructure, and achieving long-term financial sustainability. With a commitment to inclusivity and innovation, this strategy aims to build on the club's rich history of success, both on and off the pitch, to ensure meaningful contributions to the St Helens community.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

FC St Helens stands out for its commitment to inclusivity and community engagement. The disability football team has represented the club on the international stage, participating in the prestigious George Best Cup in Belfast, showcasing the club's excellence and dedication to empowering all players. Additionally, the club's strategic partnerships, such as with The Buzz Hub, highlight its focus on growing disability football and delivering impactful community programmes.



2.1 CLUB HISTORY

Established in 2014, FC St Helens was founded to provide a community-driven football experience with a focus on local talent. Since its inception, the club has achieved remarkable progress, climbing the English football pyramid and becoming a pillar of the St Helens community. The club's journey began in the West Cheshire League Division Three, followed by immediate promotion to higher tiers within the Cheshire League system. Key achievements include winning the Cheshire League Premier Division in 2022 with 82 points from 34 games and earning promotion to the North West Counties League First Division North, where they were crowned champions in the 2023/24 season.

In addition to the men's successes, the women's team has made its mark by competing in the First Round Proper of the FA Cup, defeating higher-tier teams along the way. The disability team has also shone on an international stage, participating in the prestigious George Best Cup in Belfast in 2024, showcasing the club's commitment to inclusivity and excellence across all teams.

2.2 COMMUNITY IMPACT

The club serves over 350 players across 22 teams, offering programmes for juniors, women, disabled players, and refugees. Key initiatives include mental health support, disability football, and leadership development programmes, emphasising social inclusion and personal growth.



2.3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

FC St Helens operates as a Community Interest Company (CIC), reinvesting profits into community-focused programmes and initiatives. The governance structure includes a board of directors, coaching staff, and volunteers.

3. MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

3.1 Mission Statement

To provide accessible, high-quality football opportunities that foster inclusivity, well-being, and personal growth for individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

3.2 Vision Statement

To be a regional leader in community-focused football, recognised for inclusivity, player development, and meaningful contributions to the people of St Helens.

3.3 Core Values

- **Inclusivity:** Ensuring football is accessible to all.
- **Community Spirit:** Strengthening local ties through collaboration.
- **Excellence:** Striving for high standards both on and off the pitch.
- **Integrity:** Conducting all activities with fairness and respect.



4.1 SWOT ANALYSIS

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- Strong community ties and partnerships.
- A robust junior section with multiple age groups and player pathways to senior teams.
- Established disability football programmes.
- Successful women's team, which is growing bigger and better, increasing visibility and engagement in women's football.
- Successful competitive teams.

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- All pitches are grass, making the club reliant on weather conditions, which can disrupt training and matches. Grass surfaces are also not ideal for disability players and community projects, limiting accessibility and consistent use.
- Dependence on volunteer capacity.



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- Growing interest in women's and girls' football, with an emphasis on expanding pathways for female players and increasing participation at all levels.
- The ambition is to grow our Pan disability section further, providing additional opportunities and support for players of all abilities.
- Availability of grants for community programmes and facility improvements, such as the development of an artificial all-weather pitch to ensure year-round accessibility and reduce weather-related disruptions.

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- Competition from other football clubs.
- Economic challenges affecting funding.
- Rugby League, a major sport in St Helens, represents a threat as players from the junior section may be drawn away to pursue opportunities in rugby.



4.2 PEST ANALYSIS

POLITICAL

Policies at the local and national levels often support grassroots sports, inclusion, and community engagement. This creates a favourable environment for initiatives like disability sports, mental health support, and youth development programmes. Government strategies, such as promoting physical activity and community cohesion, align with the club's mission.

ECONOMIC

The club faces rising operational costs, such as facility maintenance, equipment, and staffing. Simultaneously, it relies heavily on external funding, including grants and sponsorships, to sustain its programmes. Economic pressures may limit growth or increase competition for financial resources.



SOCIAL

Society is increasingly aware of the importance of mental health and inclusivity. This awareness benefits FC St Helens, as its initiatives address these issues directly. Programmes focused on disability sports, mental well-being, and community inclusion are likely to resonate with community needs and priorities.

TECHNOLOGICAL

Advances in technology offer opportunities for the club to engage with its community more effectively. Digital tools can enhance training, communication, and promotion while providing members access to online learning and virtual events. Technological improvements also support innovation in the club's media and broadcasting projects, such as the Match Day radio booth.



5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

5.1 Inclusivity and Accessibility

- Upgrade facilities with an all-weather 4G pitch to reduce weather-related disruptions, enhance accessibility, and host a wider range of activities, including disability training matches, football festivals, and walking football sessions.
- Expand partnerships, such as with The Buzz Hub, to grow disability football programmes and increase engagement.
- Boost participation in women's and girls' football through targeted outreach and dedicated sessions.
- Secure funding to support mental health initiatives, disability football, and grassroots development, reinforcing the club's community impact and strategic mission.

5.2 Player and Community Development

- Establish clear development pathways for players, linking junior teams to senior squads.
- Create leadership and coaching development programmes to build capacity and enhance skills within the club.
- Host regular workshops promoting mental health, resilience, and well-being for players, staff, and the wider community.



5.3 Infrastructure and Facility Development

- Convert the main pitch to an all-weather 4G surface, ensuring year-round usability and increased capacity.
- Develop an all-weather small-sided pitch ideal for our junior section and disability team, ensuring accessibility and year-round usability.
- Modernise our clubhouse and upgrade the facility with an eventual view of a new-build modern facility, complete with a bar and classrooms, to better support diverse activities and engagement opportunities.

5.4 Financial Sustainability

- Diversify income streams by increasing sponsorships, securing grants, and organising community fundraising events.
- Launch a club shop to generate revenue through merchandise sales, involving disability team members in business and customer service roles.
- Foster long-term partnerships with local businesses to strengthen financial stability and community ties.



6. ACTION PLAN

6.1 Short-Term Objectives (0-2 Years)

- Secure funding for a 4G pitch conversion to enhance year-round usability and support disability and grassroots programmes.
- Secure funding for a small-sided pitch for our junior and disability teams as well as football outreach programmes.
- Increase participation of people with a disability engaging with playing and watching football or attending our community programmes.
- Increase participation in junior girls' and women's teams by 25%.

6.2 Mid-Term Objectives (3-5 Years)

- Complete infrastructure improvements, including a modern clubhouse.
- Host regional tournaments to boost club visibility.
- Double sponsorship revenue through targeted campaigns.

6.3 Long-Term Objectives (5+ Years)

- Establish FC St Helens as a model community football club.
- Develop a sustainable governance structure to ensure long-term impact.
- Expand community programmes to include other sports and educational activities.



7. GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING

Future-Proofing the Vision

FC St Helens recognises the evolving challenges in grassroots sports, including rising operational costs and competition from Rugby League in the St Helens area. To address these challenges:

- **Diversified Funding Streams:** The club will prioritise securing long-term sponsorships, applying for grants, and increasing revenue from pitch hire and community events.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** Strengthen ties with the community through expanded disability programmes, outreach to underrepresented groups, and enhanced promotion of women's football.
- **Sustainable Operations:** Focus on eco-friendly upgrades, such as solar-powered lighting, to reduce operational costs and environmental impact.
- **Player Retention Strategies:** Implement initiatives to retain junior players by emphasising the benefits of football, including skill development, team-building, and pathways to senior teams.



7.1 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- Create a dedicated committee to oversee strategic implementation.
- Define clear roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers.

7.2 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Participation rates across all programmes.
- Revenue growth from sponsorships and merchandise.
- Progress on infrastructure development.

7.3 REVIEW AND ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK

- Conduct annual reviews to assess progress.
- Adapt goals based on community feedback and emerging opportunities.



8. APPENDICES

Unlocking Community Potential

Bishops Road Playing Fields currently offers a range of football pitches that cater to various formats of the game:

Existing Facilities:

- 3 x full-size 11-a-side pitches
- 1 x 9v9 pitch
- 1 x 7v7 junior pitch

Current Status: The playing fields include a changing facility, which is currently mothballed. FC St Helens Community CIC is in active discussions with St Helens Council to secure an asset transfer of Bishops Road and its associated facilities.

Windleshaw Sports Ground

- **Lease and Development:** FC St Helens Community CIC secured a lease from St Helens Council for the Windleshaw ground in 2019. This includes a full-size pitch, a 7v7 junior pitch, and a clubhouse with changing facilities.
- **Facility Improvements:** Since taking over the site, the club has made significant upgrades, including:
 - Extending the changing rooms to enhance accessibility and usability.
 - Adding a referees' changing room to meet modern standards.
 - Installing a food cabin and fitting a brand-new kitchen, funded by Wren Kitchens, to improve hospitality services.



Asset Transfer of Bishops Road: Taking over the management of Bishops Road will allow FC St Helens Community CIC to revitalise the site by upgrading facilities and optimising pitch usage. This will create a hub for football development and community activities, furthering inclusivity and accessibility.

Maximising Potential:

- **Bishops Road:** Plans include reopening and modernising the changing facility, expanding usage for disability sports, women's football, and grassroots programmes, and exploring the potential for new infrastructure such as small-sided pitches or training areas.
- **Windleshaw Ground:** Continue to maintain and expand its role as a cornerstone of the club's activities, hosting matches, training, and community events.



Community Impact: Consolidating control over these key sites will enable the club to better meet the needs of local residents, reduce reliance on external facilities, and foster a stronger sense of community ownership and pride.

Sustainability: Leverage the upgraded facilities to generate sustainable income through pitch hire, community events, and enhanced hospitality services.

Achievements and Future Potential

The successful renovation of the Windleshaw Ground demonstrates FC St Helens Community CIC's ability to effectively manage, improve, and utilise facilities for community benefit.

By securing the asset transfer of Bishops Road, the club can replicate this success, further establishing itself as a driving force for sports and community development in St Helens.

Appendix A: Community Feedback Summary

- Feedback from participants and community members indicates a strong demand for expanded programmes in women's and disability football.
- Positive responses to the mental health initiatives, with participants highlighting their value in fostering social connections and well-being.
- Suggestions for improvement include better accessibility in facilities, increased frequency of tournaments, and enhanced communication about upcoming events.

Appendix B: Funding Opportunities Analysis

- **Local Grants:** Applications to the St Helens Council and regional funding bodies for community-focused sports initiatives, including Section 106 funding is paid by developers and used on community infrastructure projects.
- **National Programmes:** Opportunities from Sport England, the FA, and the National Lottery for infrastructure, inclusion, and grassroots development.
- **Sponsorship:** Targeting local businesses for support through sponsorship packages linked to specific teams or projects.

Appendix C: Facility Development Plans

- **Phase 1:** Conversion of the main pitch to an all-weather 4G surface.
- **Phase 2:** Development of small-sided pitches for junior and disability football, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.
- **Phase 3:** Construction of a modern clubhouse with multipurpose community spaces, including meeting rooms and accessible facilities.
- **Sustainability:** Integration of eco-friendly technologies, such as solar panels and energy-efficient lighting, to reduce long-term operational costs.